

The League's tenth birthday is, in itself, a testimony to the admirable work which it has carried out at Geneva, a hopeful guarantee for future stability and progress. At the same time, there is a danger of weak optimism. The desire that nations should covenant with one another in order to agree on a method for settling international disputes by friendly means finds a place both in the history of Greece and Rome, and as a sequel to the terrible mediæval and religious war which desolated Europe. Can the League of Nations depend not only on the spirit on which it is administered at Geneva, but on the strength of a world opinion in favour of a peace basis in international relationships? This is the only ultimate guarantee, raising the League above political changes and the risks attendant on the re-crudescence of armament competition. This competition will not be effectively discouraged so long as the power of secret diplomacy is maintained.

The main question is whether the peoples of the world can exercise a permanent influence in the domain of foreign politics. They certainly desire peace, but there is a difficulty in giving expression to this desire. The prejudice in favour of war, as the ultimate sanction in international affairs, remains a strong factor. At first thought, it would appear that, immediately on the morrow of the Great War, so destructive to human civilization and resulting in an industrial dislocation, widespread in its ruin, some really drastic steps might have been taken in the all-round reduction of armaments. The years, however, are slipping by, and a new generation is growing up to whom the terrible memory of the Great War is less vivid. Effective disarmament is still delayed. This is so, in spite of the evidence that the most potent cause of the war outbreak was the competitive increase in armaments during the preceding decades. There is, too, the certainty that, as invention advances in the development of methods of human destruction, future warfare will bring about the silence of death. Macaulay's picture of the New Zealander gazing over the ruins of London may be realized unless the government of this country, before it is too late, gives its whole-hearted support to League principle.

There are evident signs that the prestige of the League is not being safeguarded with sufficient vigilance. Peace-lovers recognized the value of the Locarno Treaty and of the Kellogg Pact, but if Geneva is to become the true centre of international understanding, these and other movements should have found a place for discussion and settlement at Geneva. International opinion at Geneva has expressed the opinion that no general scheme of disarmament can be finally carried out unless an alternative way to war is accepted for the settling of international disputes when conciliation fails. The only suggested alternative is the acceptance of third party decision in all cases, whatever their nature or quality. This principle stands out prominently in the preamble of the Covenant of the League, one of the most solemn treaties in history. It is recognized throughout all the subsequent articles. The subsequent articles, however, contained a gap by which constituent nations might still resort to war after